

## Self-Imposed Fetters: The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions\*

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From July 30 to August 3, 2017, the 14th International *Connotations* Symposium took place at Mülheim an der Ruhr in Germany. Its topic, “Self-Imposed Fetters: The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions,” will now become the theme of a special section in the journal. Beginning with this issue, a selection of essays based on the talks given at the conference, as well as responses and other contributions to the subject, will be published in our peer-reviewed, open-access format.

The theme is typical of the *Connotations* agenda in that it combines a specific theoretical or poetological concept with aspects of style and form. As distinct from a number of earlier topics,<sup>1</sup> however, it focuses on the field of poetic production. In the following, I will explain what has given rise to discussing “Self-Imposed Fetters” by considering three sonnets that reflect on the restriction imposed by their own form. I will then distinguish three areas in which restrictions deliberately chosen by writers become productive, a process that will be explored in greater detail by the articles and responses to be published in this special section. As a last step, the most tentative of the three, I will consider what sort of literary production is paradoxically unleashed by the imposition of fetters and if there are any rules governing this process.

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\*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debate/fetters>>.

## 1. Approaches to the Paradox

As to the starting point for raising the issue of productive restrictions, there are actually two. The first was our symposium in 2011, which was dedicated to the issue of “Poetic Economy: Ellipsis and Redundancy in Literature” (see Bauer, “Poetic Economy”). The topic went back to an idea developed by Inge Leimberg, our founding editor, many years ago, when she wrote a seminal essay on the theme of “one word cannot be lost” in Renaissance poetics (the phrase is from Sir Philip Sidney’s *Apology for Poetry* 101).<sup>2</sup> One of the *Connotations* essays resulting from that symposium is Sven Wagner’s article on “Figurativity and the Economy of Means in Contemporary Haiku.” The title shows the relationship to “Self-Imposed Fetters” since the Haiku is one of the most restricting forms imaginable. But there is also a fundamental difference: whereas *poetic economy* means making every single element of a work fulfil its function in such a way that nothing can be either left out or added, *self-imposed fetters* means choosing restrictions that will challenge and set free the writer’s creativity and inventiveness as well as help uncover the full potential of a poetic idea. As regards both subjects, we are concerned with an underexplored field of literary studies, namely the investigation into processes of production (underexplored at least when compared to scholarship about the author, about textuality and reader reception). While *poetic economy* is about finding the best possible form for what one has to say, *self-imposed fetters* are about finding what one has to say by defining (restricting) the dimension of saying it (which comprises both formal and thematic restrictions).

The second starting point was a class I took with John Hollander, also many years ago, in which he introduced us to the topic of self-imposed fetters by drawing our attention to Wordsworth’s sonnet “Nuns fret not at their Convent’s narrow room.”<sup>3</sup>

Nuns fret not at their Convent’s narrow room;  
 And Hermits are contented with their cells;  
 And Students with their pensive Citadels:  
 Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,

Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,                   05  
 High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,  
 Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:  
 In truth, the prison, unto which we doom  
 Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,  
 In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound                   10  
 Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:  
 Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
 Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
 Should find short solace there, as I have found. (Wordsworth 199)

This classic example of a sonnet about sonnet-writing negates the restricting quality of restrictions chosen voluntarily: "In truth, the prison, unto which we doom / Ourselves, no prison is." The poet who deliberately chooses to be limited by the formal requirements of a sonnet does not regard those requirements as limitations. I have always wondered how seriously the attitude expressed by the poem is to be taken. Wordsworth seems to be saying that, after ranging through the expanses of philosophical blank verse, he relishes the narrow room of the sonnet as welcome if temporary resting place.

My sceptical response is, in particular, based on the second part of the sonnet, the sestet that begins with "and hence to me": the choice of the "scanty plot of ground" of the sonnet is expressly called a "pastime," a mildly masochistic game of bondage the poet is willing to play when he is in "sundry moods." Fetters are fine when you have been too much at liberty, when this liberty even becomes a "weight": readers, like the writer, in that case will find solace in the restriction. What bothers me is that the sonnet is (seriously or not) merely regarded as a toy providing "short solace," a welcome relief of the burden of freedom. The form and its restrictions are not said to provide anything else. For nuns and hermits it is okay to live in a narrow space; they don't find it unnerving, but that's it. There is no suggestion that they might have chosen the restriction of outward space in order to enhance, for example, their meditative experience. Or that they perhaps *do* fret at their self-imposed restrictions but turn them into an advantage. That is to say, we only find the first part of our symposium title represented by Wordsworth's poem, the self-

imposed fetters, but not the second, as the restrictions themselves are never said to contribute to productivity. (With the exception, perhaps, of the students' "pensive" citadels, where the limited space seems to be conducive to thought.)

If we regard liberty as coeval with poetic inventiveness, any kind of restriction is simply a curtailment of that inventiveness. Implicitly, I think, this notion contributes to historicizing our topic, for it seems to me that the romantic rejection of formal restriction, even though it may, as in Wordsworth's poem, perversely appear in the guise of its willing acceptance, marks one strand of thought on poetic freedom and productivity that has had its periods of strength, whereas at other times the value of restrictions has been appreciated more strongly. An example of the latter is T. S. Eliot's statement (in "Reflections on *Vers Libre*") that "there is no freedom in art. And as the so-called *vers libre* which is good is anything but free, it can better be defended under some other label" (32). Similarly, William Carlos Williams confessed in his autobiography: "Free verse wasn't verse at all to me. All art is orderly" (65). These statements do not expressly tell us that the imposition of order contributes to the poet's creativity, but implicitly, e.g. by Eliot's epithet "good," they take us nearer to our paradox: what is good is "anything but free," and if we do not take this statement as a praise of restrictions for their own sake we must see it as advocating restrictions as a source of something else, poetic quality. This quality is a mark of what is "good," of what is really "art."

Still, we have not yet fully grasped our paradox. We see, in Eliot's and Williams's statements, that structure or order, i.e. something imposed upon total freedom, is claimed to be a requirement of verse and art. But this could be merely regarded as a definition of the work itself, X is only X if it has the feature Y, verse is only verse if there is some restriction. From Eliot's statement we may infer that the restrictions may be different from what we are used to, such as metre and rhyme, but that they are nevertheless there, for instance in the form of quite subtle but distinctive rhythmical patterns. We may think of the German expression for verse, *gebundene Rede*, literally "bound" (or

fettered) speech, which is simply a descriptive term and does not tell us anything about productive forces.

In order to arrive at our paradoxical notion of productivity made possible by restrictions it is worth considering the notion of resistance, which is a key to the idea of productive force. Thus, on a large scale, from a sociological point of view, Adorno claimed that aesthetic productive force and art itself come to life by social resistance.<sup>4</sup> On a more specific, poetological level, this can be seen in another self-reflexive sonnet, Keats's poem "If by dull rhymes our english must be chaind."

Incipit altera Sonnetta

I have been endeavouring to discover a better Sonnet Stanza than we have. The legitimate does not suit the language over-well from the pouncing rhymes—the other kind appears too elegiac—and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect—I do not pretend to have succeeded—it will explain itself—

If by dull rhymes our english must be chaind,  
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet  
 Fetterd, in spite of pained Loveliness  
 Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,  
 Sandals more interwoven and complete                    05  
     To fit the naked foot of Poesy—  
 Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress  
     Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd  
     By ear industrious, and attention meet.  
 Misers of sound and syllable, no less                    10  
     Than Midas of his coinage, let us be  
     Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;  
     So, if we may not let the muse be free,  
 She will be bound with Garlands of her own. (Keats 254-55)

In this sonnet, the poet clearly stresses the resistance to formal restrictions, in this case the "dull rhymes" required by the sonnet form. These restrictions provoke in him the desire to do something, to make it better, in line 4: "Let us find out, if we must be constrained [...]." This is a call for poetic invention because *finding out* not only means finding e.g. the reason for something but is also the equivalent of *invenire*.<sup>5</sup> The ambiguity continues, for while the line at first seems to

question the need for constraint (“Let us find out, if we must be constrain’d”), it then goes on to treat the constraint as a necessary condition which has the effect of enhancing perfection (“Let us find out [...] / Sandals more interwoven and complete”). This is in fact what we can see in the poem itself, as it replaces an established sonnet form by something “more interwoven” in an abca bdca bcd ede rhyme scheme. The ambiguity is of the *apo koinou* kind, of the “sense variously drawn out from one verse into another,” as Milton puts it,<sup>6</sup> a choice which in itself reflects the breaking up of a fixed pattern, in this case a syntactic one. Invention and poetic creativity, in this sonnet, are clearly shown to be the result of and response to a binding restriction.

There is something about the restriction in Keats’s sonnet, however, that deserves further attention. In contradistinction to Wordsworth, Keats does not compare the poet’s creativity or genius to a figure that is chained but, curiously, the sonnet itself. “And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet / Fetterd, in spite of pained Loveliness.” The concept of restriction and resistance is thus moved to the realm of genre and form itself. The beautiful nature of a genre, in this case the sonnet, should come into its own not by doing away with the fetters but by making them better and more appropriate. The fetters are productive in that they challenge the poet to adapt and improve them so that the restricting form becomes a fitting and beautiful garment. With the evocation of Midas, the theme of poetic economy is integrated into the argument: what the resistance to the fetters brings about is a more economical use of poetic form in the sense of avoiding superfluous “sound[s] and syllable[s],” i.e. avoiding “dead leaves,” elements of poetic language that do not really contribute to the “interwoven and complete” form. Here we see that the two principles, finding the least redundant (most restricted) form for what one has to say and finding what one has to say through the restriction of form, interact with each other.

There is still a problem with regard to the paradox that forms our subject. Whereas in Wordsworth’s sonnet the second part of the subject seemed absent, as the fetters were just accepted for a while with-

out being any special cause of productivity, in Keats the first part of the proposition seems absent. The chains provoke resistance and lead to productivity, but are they self-imposed? The expressions “must be chained” and “must be constrain’d,” for example, do not point in the direction of a prison unto which we voluntarily doom ourselves. Apart from the fact, however, that since no one has forced Keats to write sonnets we may assume he chooses the form deliberately (in fact, Wolfson’s note [254] says that Keats “had written about 60 sonnets by spring 1819 but would write very few after this”), we should register that the whole poem begins with a conditional clause, “If by dull rhymes our English must be chaind,” followed by another one, “Let us find out, if we must be constrain’d.” The two *ifs* clearly state that dull rhyming etc. is by no means a necessity, but if there must be such constraints, then we had better do something about them, turn them into the most meaningful and appropriate ones. Thus, the very fact that the chains are only imposed as a possible condition shows that Keats’s poetic “we” actually chooses the challenge of this poetic form with the aim of liberating it through turning the fetters into garlands.

Still, the mythological comparison shows us that the fetters themselves are part and parcel of the poetic statement. A brief look at (for example) Rubens’s painting of Andromeda (c. 1638)<sup>7</sup> serves to make this evident:



The fetters are needed to identify the mythological subject; they establish the most substantial difference between the portrayal of an ambiguously weeping woman and a version of the mythological story. Analogously, some basic pattern of the sonnet is needed (in Keats's case, eight and six iambic pentameter lines) in order to mark the presence of the form and to make it possible to comment on it and transform it. It is in keeping with this attitude that at the end of Keats's sonnet the strict "must" of the beginning has been toned down to a milder "may": "So, if we may not let the muse be free, / She will be bound with Garlands of her own." The fetters have shifted from the personified "Sonnet sweet" to another female personage, the Muse, and by this shift we have actually made a step from the condition of the text and genre (compare Eliot and Williams on free verse that is not free) to the conditions of the poetic creation. In spite of the "if," the whole action is now much more about the author's will—we authorial selves may not let the muse be free, or perhaps we may. If the poet chooses not to let her go free, or if it is impossible to let her go

free, the fetters imposed will not be fetters at all but “garlands” of her own making, i.e. the fetters themselves become products of the poetic creativity.

Even though we have noticed a much more productive effect of fetters in Keats when compared to Wordsworth, we still have not yet found a full expression of the notion we wish to pursue in this special section of *Connotations*, the productivity of self-chosen restrictions, mainly because Keats is, as we have seen, primarily concerned with the nature of the fetters themselves. We can go a step further by considering a third poetological sonnet, Goethe’s “Nature and Art”:

Natur und Kunst, sie scheinen sich zu fliehen  
 Und haben sich, eh’ man es denkt, gefunden;  
 Der Widerwille ist auch mir verschwunden,  
 Und beide scheinen gleich mich anzuziehen.  
 Es gilt wohl nur ein redliches Bemühen!                    05  
 Und wenn wir erst in abgemeßnen Stunden  
 Mit Geist und Fleiß uns an die Kunst gebunden,  
 Mag frei Natur im Herzen wieder glühen.  
 So ist’s mit aller Bildung auch beschaffen:  
 Vergebens werden ungebundne Geister                    10  
 Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben.  
 Wer Großes will, muß sich zusammenraffen.  
 In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,  
 Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben. (Goethe 245)

Nature and Art, they go their separate ways,  
 It seems; yet all at once they find each other.  
 Even I no longer am a foe to either;  
 Both equally attract me nowadays.  
 Some honest toil’s required; then, phase by phase,                    05  
 When diligence and wit have worked together  
 To tie us fast to Art with their good tether,  
 Nature again may set our hearts ablaze.  
 All culture is like this; the unfettered mind,  
 The boundless spirit’s mere imagination,                    10  
 For pure perfection’s heights will strive in vain.  
 To achieve great things, we must be self-confined:  
 Mastery is revealed in limitation  
 And law alone can set us free again. (Trans. David Luke)

In the octave, the poem is concerned with the relationship of nature and art, their apparent divergence and actual convergence. Tying ourselves with “diligence and wit” to art may make it possible for nature to glow in the heart again. This paper is not the place to discuss Goethe’s understanding of art and nature but it seems clear that the notion of restriction goes together with art, as the expressions “in abgemeßnen Stunden” (l. 6, in measured hours; not translated in David Luke’s version) and “gebunden” (l. 7, cf. “tie us”) suggest. This deliberate fettering is then further generalized in the sestet, where Goethe speaks of “aller Bildung” (l. 9), translated by Luke as “all culture,” which is not wrong but the German may also have the specific sense of artistic creation.<sup>8</sup> Any greatness and perfection attempted in the process of creation presuppose, as the aphorism-like lines claim, restriction. “[U]ngebundne Geister,” unbound spirits or minds (a more precise rendering than Luke’s “boundless spirit[s]”) will fail; self-restriction (or self-confinement) is needed if such an ambition is to be fulfilled. Restriction thus appears quite clearly as the *condition* of a production (poetic and otherwise) that is in any sense to become first-rate. Less obvious is the way in which such restrictions actually translate into the quality of artistic creation. Goethe’s focus is on the person of the artist rather than on the production process itself: “In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister”; the translation “Mastery is revealed in limitation” is not quite exact in that it is the master, not mastery, which is revealed. Still, the expression “zeigt sich,” “shows himself/herself,” indicates that the restriction itself is where the master unfolds his or her productive power.

Goethe’s emphasis on the master artist shows that our subject participates in both psychology and aesthetics (or, more specifically, poetics). Actually, contemporary psychological research in creativity (a notoriously elusive subject) has emphasized that constraints are conducive to it; as Johnson-Laird points out: “for what is not constrained is not creative” (202), and as Biskjaer and Halskov stress as recently as in 2014: “Rather than seeing constraints as problems or obstacles that a creative agent [...] must work against or work around,

we argue that the enabling property of constraints in creative practice be studied more in depth" (27). This encouragement from the field of psychological research shows how timely our enterprise is but it also raises the question of the specific role to be played by literary studies in the investigation of the subject. My suggestion is to play to our strengths and learn more about it by textual analysis, i.e. to find out what kinds of restrictions are visible (or audible) in a literary text and, if possible, what the effect of those restrictions is. This approach should go beyond the defining textual and generic qualities mentioned earlier, i.e. X is only X if it has the feature Y, a sonnet is only a sonnet if there are 14 lines, and arrive at a description of what is actually gained by the restrictions. To reach this aim will be one of the challenges of our work in this special section of *Connotations* and beyond.

## 2. Kinds of Restrictions

If we look at the nature of the restrictions to be found in literary production, we should try and go beyond the most obvious cases. This is why I suggest to consider at least three kinds or groups of restrictions, which are not without overlap but which nevertheless help us, I hope, arrive at an idea of the range of the processes involved. The first group may be called formal restrictions, the second thematic and plot-related restrictions (the *mythos* in an Aristotelian sense), and the third restrictions of scope.

Formal restrictions not only comprise the metrical and rhyming rules connected to specific genres but also deliberate and sometimes arbitrary restrictions of the language and semiotic system employed. Well-known examples of rather severe restrictions of the first kind are the limerick and the villanelle and of the second kind are experiments associated with the French Oulipo, *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, and the work of John Cage (see Baetens). (The very name *potential literature* suggests the productivity of self-chosen restrictions.) Frequently, there

is something playful about these constraints, especially when they are not yet conventionalized (as opposed to established genres such as the villanelle) but are entirely arbitrary in a singular way. The case of the lipogram, a “text in which a given letter or set of letters is deliberately left out” (Poucel), shows that the experimental (becoming manifest in George Perec’s *La Disparition* of 1969 [English *A Void*, translated by Gilbert Adair in 1995] with its omission of the letter *e*) is frequently both new and old. More recent examples include Mark Dunn’s novel *Ella Minnow Pea* (2001), which in the hardcover version has the subtitle *A Progressively Lipogrammatic Epistolary Fable* and in the softcover version of 2002 is more succinctly called *A Novel in Letters*. In the course of events, more and more letters of the alphabet are forbidden, and the book accordingly becomes more and more lipogrammatic. This is a case where the productivity of the restriction can easily be seen since the formal limitation becomes the source of a political dystopia and a reflection on knowledge and human communication.

I would like to mention just two further examples in order to show how far the range of self-imposed fetters may be in the area of form and semiotic systems. The first is from Patience Agbabi’s rap-inspired poetic retelling of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, called *Telling Tales* (2014). The Monk’s Tale here takes the form of a text message, inspired, as the spurious biographical note claims, by Chaucer’s introduction, “tragedies wol I telle, / of which I have an hundred in my celle” (118). It is called “100 chars,” the first stanza of which runs:

wen a mn opN fires hs wa 2 d top thN  
loses all overnyt blatN has 3rd eye W a  
fulstop dat’s nt tragDy (88)

In this case, the productivity of the restriction results from the relation between the abbreviated code and the intertextual reference. My second example shows that focusing on a particular kind of verbal expression can also be a restriction from which a whole story may develop. I am thinking of the focus on idiomatic expressions in Peggy Parish’s delightful *Amelia Bedilia* of 1963, a restriction which then

becomes productive in the story of the literal-minded housemaid, who carries out her instructions to the letter. My favourite is “‘The chicken—you dressed the chicken?’ asked Mrs. Rogers. ‘Yes, and I found the nicest box to put him in,’ said Amelia Bedilia” (n.p.).



We see from this example that frequently the creative potential of self-imposed formal and linguistic restrictions lies in the invitation to transcend them, a process which would be impossible without the fetters being there in the first place. Examples are variations on the sonnet, such as Gerard Manley Hopkins’s curtail sonnets or John Hollander’s *Powers of Thirteen* (13 times 13 13-line “sonnets”), and in the case of *Amelia Bedilia* it is the transcendence of the idiomatic meaning itself which is invited by the restriction.

The second group of restrictions, theme and plot-related ones, run the risk of becoming so general that they are meaningless. Any choice of subject by an author is a self-imposed restriction in so far as she or he is bound to write about it. The *topoi* or search formulae of classical rhetoric belong here, by which *inventio* is produced. Nevertheless, we should not drop this group, especially when we consider it in a slightly more specific sense. When a story or theme is established through history or intertextual discourse, binding oneself to it may either result in a mere repetition of what has been told a hundred times before, or it may trigger the author’s inventiveness by turning a story into a means of communication for a new idea. We will learn

more about this in Susanne Riecker's and Angelika Zirker's forthcoming paper on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* where both the chosen form (the genre of tragedy) and a specific historical event provide rather strict fetters that give rise to creating a unique play.

My example for now is Gerard Manley Hopkins's sonnet "Andromeda," in which he takes up the well-known myth of the daughter of Cassiopeia, who is chained to a rock as a sacrifice to Poseidon as she has to atone for her mother's hubris. In Ovid and other accounts, she is saved by Perseus from the monster that is about to devour her. In Hopkins's poem, as Inge Leimberg has pointed out ("Time's Andromeda"), the myth is not only used typologically to allude to Jesus's act of redemption but also to change the established roles. In stressing Andromeda's "patience," who/which "alight[s] disarming," Hopkins has her participate in defeating the Monster. "The patience of suffering which has been increased *in extremis* 'alight[s]' weaponless and is, precisely because of that, 'disarming'" (Leimberg, "Time's Andromeda," n.p.). The myth in this case becomes a framework for communicating (quite economically) a story of imprisonment and liberation, which is then transformed into a complex reflection on the nature of suffering and redemption.

The third group of restrictions, labelled "scope," takes its cue from Wordsworth's poem, in particular from the spatial image in "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room." While, in Wordsworth, this is a metaphor for the space of the poem itself (alluding to "stanza" meaning "room"), we are also aware of the fact that space is a dimension of the mimesis, of the represented world. Temporal, spatial, and social limitation of that world (one day, one place, only one small group of people) is a frequent self-imposed restriction. Jane Austen's "little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work" (323)<sup>9</sup> is perhaps the best-known statement about this sort of constraint; it implies the claim that this is a kind of limitation that comes with a huge gain, as it suggests the idea of a gem or precious work of art. The value comes with the restriction, and what at first appears to be simply an expression of modesty is in fact a quite lofty claim. Even though this

kind of self-reflexive insight by writers may be rare, the practice of self-imposed limitations of scope is a common one, ranging (in English literature alone) from Prospero's island to the 24 hours of Bloomsday. And if we may widen this group a little and include the deliberate choice of the insignificant, like John Donne's flea or the fly that Dickinson's speaker hears when she dies ("I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—"; Johnson ed. no. 465), we immediately see the power of this restriction of scope. It becomes a device for increasing intensity, for making us see much in little, or, from the perspective of production, to unleash the writer's power of conception, imagination and verbal inventiveness by narrowing the focus. Donne's "The Flea" is a case in point, for it is a challenge to the speaker's (or poet's) ingenuity to provide the insect with significance and make it become a trigger of wit.

### 3. Kinds of Effects

When it comes to my last step, the sort of production paradoxically unleashed by the imposition of fetters, it seems to me that there are at least two different kinds. On the one hand, the self-imposed restriction has the effect of causing some sort of resistance, as we have seen in the case of Keats's poem. Accordingly, productivity is brought about by an obstacle that is to be overcome. On the other hand, the restriction may lead to a focussing of attention, and, as a consequence, to an unfolding of what is contained within the chosen limitations. The literal meaning of idioms in the case of *Amelia Bedelia* serves as an example of this kind of restriction-induced productivity. As to any general rules, it is much too early to draw them up but hypothetically I would like to suggest that there is an optimal effect of restriction: neither very little nor very much restriction will trigger the highest productiveness. What makes me think so is a comparison between games and works of literature. Whereas the former are marked by a strict imposition of rules—they are, in fact, entirely dependent on

restrictions—and enable us to show only a limited degree of creativity (even chess being no exception),<sup>10</sup> the latter are marked by a high degree of freedom—we may say that freedom is a condition of art to most people and in most conceptions—but need some self-imposed constraints in order to exploit their (and their authors’) potential. The sonnet, which is characterized by its formal regularity, has, historically speaking, been remarkable for much greater poetic inventiveness than the villanelle, whose rules are stricter. What is needed is exactly the right kind and degree of restriction so as to prevent literature from becoming a mere mechanical game on the one hand and a mere will-o’-the-wisp on the other. Let us try and find out more about this optimal effect.<sup>11</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See the list at <http://www.connotations.de/special-issues/>.

<sup>2</sup>For a recent study of versions of *Hamlet* based on this poetological notion, see Bross.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Hollander’s statement in Baer, *Fourteen on Form* 227-28: “JOHN HOLLANDER: [...] having some kind of structural agenda is the means for conjuring up all the other stuff. The silly notion that ‘If I just let it all hang out, then I’ll be able to get at the deepest things within myself,’ is quite ridiculous. It’s just a bit of romantic mythology—the near-romanticism of high modernism—that by throwing away certain formal conventions, writers will have greater access to themselves. Such people always forget Wordsworth’s great sonnet. ‘Nuns Fret Not ...’ JOHN HOLLANDER: Yes, that’s right. Sure the sonnet’s a small space that you lock yourself into, but it’s not a prison. It’s a cell, and it’s liberating.”

<sup>4</sup>“A pure productive force such as that of the aesthetic, once freed from heteronomous control, is objectively the counterimage of enchained forces, but it is also the paradigm of fateful, self-interested doings. Art keeps itself alive through its social force of resistance [...]” (308).

<sup>5</sup>See *OED* 2.ta. *trans.* “To discover by attention, scrutiny, study, etc.; to solve, explain. Also: to devise, invent. *Obs.*”

<sup>6</sup>In his note on “The Verse” of *Paradise Lost* (55).

<sup>7</sup>Gemäldegalerie Berlin;  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter\\_Paul\\_Rubens\\_-\\_Andromeda\\_-\\_WGA20316.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_-_Andromeda_-_WGA20316.jpg)

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Adelung (1811) "bilden"  
[http://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung//lemma/bsb00009131\\_4\\_2\\_2565](http://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung//lemma/bsb00009131_4_2_2565)

<sup>9</sup>Austen in a letter to her nephew James Edward Austen, 16-17 December, 1816.

<sup>10</sup>It stands to reason that even within the sphere of games there is an optimal degree of rule-governed restriction with respect to creativity.

<sup>11</sup>I am grateful to Lena Linne, Burkhard Niederhoff, and Angelika Zirker for their feedback and valuable suggestions.

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